

Dear Sir or Madam,

3/7/2015

I am writing to provide my testimony for the public hearing being held to discuss Governor Malloy's budget proposal. My name is Pietro Andres, My wife and I moved to CT just over 10 years ago. We specifically chose CT because we felt it would provide the best opportunity for our son, who by then had been diagnosed on the Autism Spectrum. We were fortunate to find The Kennedy Center through the Birth To Three program. These caring and helpful people started us on a difficult, but rewarding road whereby our son, now 12 years old, is fully mainstreamed in the Fairfield School systems.

Since our arrival in CT, we have become a part of the Kennedy Center family. My wife has worked on several fundraisers, and I have become a member of the board of directors. During this time I have been progressively alarmed at the lack of funding allocated to nonprofits such as The Kennedy Center. These non-profits serve over half a million individuals with disabilities, three fourths of the CT population in need. But they do this with the same money with which the state is able to serve the other 25%. In other words, the cost of services from the state is over 2.5 times more that the same services from private providers.

One would think that under those circumstances, a bulk of the state funds would be shifted to those institutions that can provide more efficient and higher quality services. Instead, in CT, since 2012, four rounds of modifications to the budget due to the recession have reduced funding to non-profits to put them on the brink. Already, non-profits like the Kennedy center struggle to maintain a quality workforce. Moreover, several non-profits have been forced to do the unthinkable: close program.

This chronic underfunding has left the not-for profit system which supports people with disabilities on the verge of unraveling. With the significant budget cuts to DDS proposed with the current budget proposal, the system is bound to fail. This will put an enormous burden on the economy, and the state system will be forced to take over the care of the people served by the failed non-profits. Once these institutions fail, it will be nearly impossible for them to be re-established.

But more importantly, CT individuals and their families will suffer enormous personal losses.

As a parent who has benefited from the CT non-profits, and who is now a participant and advocate for these institutions I beg of you to reconsider this budget. Nonprofits must receive adequate annual increases indexed to the cost of living in order for the system to survive.

I urge you to do the right thing.

Sincerely

Pietro Andres  
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